

From: Lois Laczko March 26, 2010 1:10:11 PM
Subject: Economic Development Commission Minutes 03/11/2010 ADOPTED
To: SimsburyCT_EconMin
Cc:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MINUTES
March 11, 2010
REGULAR MEETING

1. Call To Order

Chairman Deming called the regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission to order at 7:38 AM in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. Commission members Kevin Crimmins, Alan Needham, and Nancy Haase were present.

2. Approval of Minutes of February 11, 2010

The minutes of February 11, 2010 were tabled until the next regularly scheduled meeting due to a lack of a quorum.

3. Reports: SMSP, FVVA

Ms. Nielsen stated that Main Street Partnership has had discussions with several banks regarding a business loan pool. Discussions were started, although Simsbury does not meet the threshold to start this program. She stated that the issue is to connect businesses with financing. They would like to reach out to existing business and entrepreneurs.

Ms. Nielsen stated that because of these discussions, a far better program is evolving. They are putting together "Show Me the Money", which is a Business Expo. They have 6 banks involved. They have already had two planning meetings for this event. After the kick-off event of the expo, tailored seminars will then be held around the Valley. Ms. Nielsen stated that there is real excitement with this new event. She is hopeful that the Economic Development Commission will give their input and partnership with this new venture. She stated that they will need help from this Commission regarding the seminars and welcoming the businesses to the expo.

Ms. Anstey stated that the Film Commission is going well. They have made an agreement to hold their meetings at the Iron Frog in Simsbury. They will also have a Film Commission sign up at the FVA office.

Ms. Anstey stated that Dream Ride is up and coming, although publicity for this event is not out yet. The Antique Car Show will be held on July 11th. Promotions will be done soon for this event. March Madness will be held this month also. It is a spring fundraiser; Best Buy will be donating televisions. A silent auction and a tea auction will be held at this event and refreshments will be served.

Ms. Anstey stated that a Barn Tour will be held May 1st and also in October. Several barns will be toured in May; others will be toured in October.

4. Discussion of a Business Improvement Districts (BID) in CT

Bob Santy stated that Connective Economic Resource Center (CERC) partners with the State in assisting businesses. Regarding Business Improvement Districts, the Town needs to find out what services or products Simsbury does not have that should be in this type of district. Business Improvement Districts are used all over the country. They are a funding mechanism. If a Business Improvement District is created in Simsbury, the Town should make it a part of what the Economic Development Commission and Main Street Partnership does. Mr. Santy stated that, under State law, a Business Improvement District needs to have 50% of the property owners to agree to the district and 50% of the assessed value of the property within that area to agree to it. He stated that Simsbury would also have to establish the Business Improvement District by Town Ordinance.

Mr. Santy stated that the existing organizations, such as Main Street Partnership can act as ambassador to get a Business Improvement District. In most cases, there is a combination of safety issues and cleanliness issues, as well as a welcoming presence in the district. With respect to getting property owners in the area on board, he stated that it is important that they understand that they will get a group of services that is above and beyond what the Town is currently providing. The property owners need to see the value of being assessed at a higher amount.

Mr. Santy distributed a handout regarding Business Improvement Districts to the Commission members.

Ms. Nielsen stated that Simsbury Main Street, approximately 4 years ago, looked into a Business Improvement District for Simsbury. They did run some preliminary numbers. Some businesses were open to this idea, although they did have issues with the amount of money that would need to be generated to do some of these things. She stated that since Charrette has been completed, this brings this type of district back in a real way.

Chairman Deming questioned if they would need to market the area as a

district or a more comprehensive area. Mr. Santy stated that the services can be anything the property owners want. The question is whether this is suited to providing the services as opposed to an economic development corporation.

Chairman Deming questioned if a Businesses Improvement District was more for retail. Mr. Santy stated that it is generally used in the retail environment where the Town is trying to draw people into a commercial district.

Commissioner Needham questioned if the Business Improvement District is more urban inclined as opposed to small Town inclined. Mr. Santy stated that, in Connecticut, these districts tend to be in the larger cities.

Commissioner Haase questioned if this is only property tax driven or could it be a mechanism to accept funding if there was a tool to accept monies from developers if they were given certain exception. Mr. Santy stated that the Business Improvement District is primarily a funding stream; it is a stream that may be combined with other funding streams.

Chairman Deming questioned how a Business Improvement District is administered. Mr. Santy stated that a Business Improvement District is administered by its own Board of Directors.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that that he feels that this would be like a buy-in group for certain services, such as snow removal and sanitation. He stated that this type of district may help business owners save money and in turn use those funds for generalized marketing of the downtown. Ms. Nielsen stated that this is one mechanism for the Town to help business owners.

Ms. Nielsen stated that, like a Business Improvement District, there are Special Services Districts in Middletown, Manchester and New Haven. She stated that she could invite someone from these Towns to come in to talk to the Economic Development Commission if they were interested. Mr. Santy stated that Hartford has just created a Business Improvement District; New Britain and Stamford also have them.

5. Discussion of the Status of the PAD zoning regulation, and possible recommendation to Zoning Commission

Mr. Peck stated that many of the Commissions have been considering the PAD draft regulation which is going to public hearing on March 15th. The Design Review Board did make recommendations to the draft regulation, although no motion was made at their meeting. Chairman Dahlquist will be

making a presentation at the public hearing. The Planning Commission did recommend changes to the draft regulation and a motion was unanimous in support the PAD Regulation with their recommendations. Chairman Loomis will be making a presentation at the public hearing as well.

Mr. Peck stated that the public hearing has been a long effort to get public comment. This is what March 15th will be about. After the public hearing, the Zoning Commission will take the comments and input from the public hearing and make changes to the regulation if necessary.

Mr. Peck stated that Attorney Sitkowski is currently reviewing this regulation as well.

Mr. Peck stated that, after talking to developers, they feel that this process will benefit them and will help make the process shorter and easier. One informal project on West Street has already come in to the Zoning Commission. Everyone involved felt that this first meeting was successful. This regulation has a lot of merit with regard to moving forward.

Mr. Peck stated that the public hearing will be held at 7p.m. at Eno Memorial Hall. Depending on if any substantial changes are made to the regulation by the Zoning Commission, another public hearing may be necessary. Smaller changes regarding clarification can be made without another public hearing. This determination will be made by the Town Attorney.

Chairman Deming stated that he will speak at the public hearing for the Economic Development Commission in favor of the draft. The Commission members agreed.

Ms. Nielsen stated that Main Street Partnership took a vote to support the PAD Regulation with minor revisions. The Board wants to convey that they feel that the PAD is necessary although larger issues need to be considered by the Town to try to get good development in a more time effective and cost effective way.

6. Status of the Charrette process; Town Center Code and next steps

Mr. Peck stated that Code Studio is currently drafting the Town Center Code; they will be back in Town on March 22-24. There will be a series of meetings with the various Boards and Commissions. The consultant will explain where they are with the draft code, the process to finishing the code and answer any questions.

Mr. Peck stated that the consultant will be back on April 28-29 for a public presentation of the final draft. If no other changes need to be

made, the Code will be submitted to the Zoning Commission for approval as a zone change.

Mr. Peck stated that the Code will not have exact design guidelines for the Town Center. The Town does not currently have funding for this, although the Code can go forward without these guidelines. He is currently looking for funding to get these design guidelines as soon as possible.

7. Old Business/New Business: EDC's participation in the Real Estate Exchange on 3/24/2010

Chairman stated that the Economic Development Commission will participate in the Real Estate Exchange. The Chamber is funding this. Chairman Deming stated that he will be attending along with a representative from the Chamber.

Chairman Deming would like some maps from the Charrette in order to display at this event. The representative from the Chamber will also be bringing something to display.

Mr. Peck stated that there are significant projects waiting for the PAD Regulation to pass.

Mr. Peck stated that the Town is making two different efforts to acquire the State parking lots on Iron Horse Boulevard. He has talked to the Department of Transportation regarding acquiring them. Also, the Legislature has ability to do these conveyances. He has prepared a package and submitted this to the Legislature. He is hopeful that the Town will be successful in acquiring these lots; they will be a big benefit to Simsbury.

8. Adjournment

Commissioner Haase made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:43 a.m. Commissioner Crimmins seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.